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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE GOLDEN GATE AUDUBON SOCIETY



Doug Greenberg/www.flickr.com/photos/dagberg

Birders at Arrowhead Marsh, MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline, Oakland. Voter-approved funding initiatives and pressure on elected officials are essential for protecting and enhancing Bay Area parks.

Why Your Vote Counts

As we approach Election Day, Golden Gate Audubon urges all our members to get out and vote. Not only is participation vital to the vibrancy of our democracy—it is the lifeblood of environmental conservation efforts.

The decisions—and sympathies—of elected officials have significant impacts on the environment every day. Over the past year, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted to build an unnecessary bridge through the city's largest wetland restoration site. In Alameda, the U.S. Navy and the Department of Veterans Affairs are proceeding with plans to construct a large administrative and medical complex in the Alameda Wildlife Refuge, threatening the continued viability of California's most productive breeding site for the endangered California Least Tern. In the Altamont Pass, thousands of birds are killed each year, and yet elected officials have never taken a single action to stop the slaughter.

As the San Francisco Board of Supervisors was faced with approving the Candlestick Point–Hunters Point Environmental Impact Report (and the unnecessary bridge), they were put under significant pressure from the developer, business interests, and labor unions—who reportedly informed the supervisors that they would never again receive union support if they voted against the EIR or the bridge. Many

It's Christmas Bird Count Time

Join your birding friends and take part in Golden Gate Audubon's 2010 Christmas Bird Counts: Oakland on Sunday, December 19, and San Francisco on Tuesday, December 28. You'll have an enjoyable day of birding, one that you can top with a delicious dinner and the chance to hear what birds others found in the field, including where they found rarities.

Invitations to sign up for both counts have been emailed to everyone who participated recently in either count and provided an email address. Oakland co-compiler Dave Quackenbush urges those who want to participate to sign up promptly. "The holiday season is a busy time for all of us, so it really helps if you sign up early. Remember, we welcome birders of every experience level. And it helps the environment if you sign up online—this will save paper and the cost of mailing. If you participated recently but we don't have an email address for you, we'll snail-mail the forms to you."

This season marks the 111th year of Christmas Bird Counts. Each count attempts to identify and tally the birds within a defined 15-mile-diameter circle during one calendar day. Last year, thousands of volunteers counted roughly 60 million birds across the Americas and beyond. The National Audubon Society has made the results of all counts since 1900 accessible at www.audubon.org/bird/cbc/hr_index.html.

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ROSTER

Diane Ross-Leech President
Rich Walkling Vice President
Mark Mushkat Treasurer
Karim Al-Khafaji
Whitney Dotson
Alan Harper
Carey Knecht
Michael Lozeau
Sarah Peterman
Jay Pierrepont
Phil Price
Linda Vallee

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Mark Welther 510.843.9912
mwelther@goldengateaudubon.org

CONSERVATION DIRECTOR
Mike Lynes 510.843.6551
mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org

CONSERVATION PROJECT MANAGER
Noreen Weeden 510.301.0570
nweeden@goldengateaudubon.org

DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR
Marsha Mather-Thrift 510.843.7295
mmathert@goldengateaudubon.org

ECO-EDUCATION PROGRAM MANAGER
Anthony DeCicco 510.843.7293
adecicco@goldengateaudubon.org

OFFICE MANAGER
Stephanie Strait 510.843.2222

YOUTH COORDINATOR
Jennifer Robinson Maddox 510.843.9374
jrobinson@goldengateaudubon.org

STAFF MANAGING EDITOR
Judith Dunham jdunham@earthlink.net

WEBER STAFF
Bruce Mast observe@goldengateaudubon.org

WEB EDITOR
webeditor@goldengateaudubon.org

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA BIRD BOX
415.681.7422

The Golden Gate Audubon Society was founded January 25, 1917, and became a chapter of National Audubon in 1948. Golden Gate Audubon Supporting Membership is \$35 per year. Renewals should be sent to the Golden Gate Audubon office. The board of directors meets six times per year (schedule can be obtained from the main office).

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Golden Gate Audubon Society
2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G
Berkeley, CA 94702
TEL 510.843.2222 FAX 510.843.5351
www.goldengateaudubon.org
ggas@goldengateaudubon.org

Nature Store hours: Monday-Friday, 10-5

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT from page 1

Researchers and bird-watchers alike use the data to help study changes in resident bird populations.

The Oakland count circle extends from Treasure Island northeast to the San Pablo Reservoir in Contra Costa County, and south to St. Mary's College in Moraga and the Oakland International Airport. With its wide variety of habitats, the Oakland count typically records more than 170 bird species. The San Francisco count circle includes the north tower of the Golden Gate Bridge and all of San Francisco, and reaches down the peninsula to San Bruno Mountain and the wetlands north of the San Francisco International Airport. Also blessed with a wide variety of habitats, the San Francisco count generally tops 160 species. Both counts have ranked among the top 25 nationwide in terms of numbers of species found.

"We want a good number of participants, so that we can do a good job of covering every area in our count circle," says Dave. "You can search for birds from dawn to dusk—or longer if you look for owls, as some of us do. We'll do our best to assign you to an area that suits your interests, your abilities, and your specific requests, such as to count with friends. Wherever you're assigned, you'll work with an experienced area leader. If your time is limited, you can still help by spending a few hours looking for birds around your workplace or in a nearby park. We want yard watchers, too. Some species, such as Pine Siskin, are often found mostly at feeders."

Golden Gate Audubon's two Christmas Counts are a popular tradition: Oakland usually attracts 150-plus field observers, and San Francisco more than 90. This will be the 70th Oakland count: let's try for a record number of participants!

Both counts end the day with a festive group dinner. Everyone is invited—field counters, yard watchers, and anyone else who wants to join the fun. "The dinner is a great event in its own right," says Dave. "It's affordable, and it's a great way to conclude the day. People tell about their day in the field, hear from the other count areas, and figure out how many species we recorded. We also learn what rare birds were found, like last year's Gray Flycatcher, and where." GGA Development Director Marsha Mather-Thrift will plan the dinners this year. She promises plenty of tasty food, including irresistible desserts, so that everyone can go home filled with good food and memories of a good day of birding. Even if you're unable to participate in the count, especially in San Francisco on a workday, Marsha invites you to join us at the dinner to visit with the counters and hear the results.

Are You Ready to Count?

If so, act now! Go to www.goldengateaudubon.org, scroll down below the Get Involved banner, and click on the Christmas Bird Count link to sign up. Sign-up deadline for the Oakland count is November 28; for the San Francisco count, it's December 7. For further information on the Oakland count, call Dave Quady, 510.704.9353, or Bob Lewis, 510.845.5001. For the San Francisco count, please email sfbirdcount@yahoo.com. Call the Golden Gate Audubon office, 510.843.2222, if you need help signing up or want more information.

Can You Help at the CBC Dinners?

Volunteers willing to help decorate, set up, serve, and clean up at the dinners are greatly appreciated. Please contact Marsha Mather-Thrift, 510.843.7295 or mmathert@goldengateaudubon.org.

Protect Wildlife Habitat—Vote Yes on Prop 21

Prop 21 on the November 2 statewide ballot will help provide a stable source of funding for the state parks system and for wildlife conservation through a new annual \$18 vehicle license fee. Every vehicle registered in California will get free, year-round day-use admission to all California state parks. The fee not only helps the parks but is a considerable savings if you visit more than two state parks per year.



CONSERVATION CORNER

REPORT DOCUMENTS WESTERN SNOWY PLOVER DECLINE

In August, Golden Gate Audubon met with the National Park Service to present the results of the 2009–10 Western Snowy Plover monitoring project at the Crissy Field Wildlife Protection Area in the Presidio of San Francisco. Key findings are that Western Snowy Plovers continue to decline at Crissy Field, from 4.11 in 2005–06 to 1.55 per survey hour in 2009–10, and that these birds are arriving later and departing earlier from this location. The plovers appear to have been negatively affected by the installation of a fence in the WPA, which allowed off-leash dogs to approach very close to the plovers' favored spot on the beach. After the installation of the fence, only one plover was observed, and no plovers were seen in the area after January. While the number of dogs declined in this survey period, the compliance with the leash law has remained at only 34 percent.

Recommendations to NPS include improving plover habitat by minimizing impacts from dogs, enhancing public outreach and education, and setting goals for enforcement and compliance with the laws. The National Park Service has asked us to encourage members to report off-leash dogs or other disturbances at Crissy Field or on Ocean Beach. If you see a problem, please report it to the park at 415.561.5505.

CRITICAL MEETINGS ON GGNRA OFF-LEASH DOG MANAGEMENT

In October, the National Park Service released the Golden Gate National Recreation Area Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for public review and comment. This long-awaited report will determine the pet policy within GGNRA sites. The first public meeting is expected in January 2011. Golden Gate Audubon will be an active participant. We ask that everyone concerned about this issue review the DEIS and provide comments, as GGA members and members of the public. It is essential that we have a good public turnout at these meetings and in the comments to ensure

that the need to protect the GGNRA's natural resources is not drowned out by extremely vocal proponents of off-leash dog activities throughout the park. If you would like to get involved, please contact Mike Lynes at mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org.

HELP RESTORE BIRD HABITAT AT GGA SITES

We invite you to join us for our monthly workdays at our restoration sites on both sides of the bay. During fall and winter, we work on site preparation and then plant when the rains come. For site details and directions, please go to www.goldengateaudubon.org/volunteer.

- Pier 94, San Francisco: November 6, December 4, 9 a.m. to noon.
- Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline, Oakland: November 20, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Alameda Wildlife Refuge, Alameda: November 14, December 12, 9 a.m. to noon.

BREEDING SUCCESS AT ALAMEDA LEAST TERN COLONY

The endangered California Least Terns that nest at the Alameda Wildlife Refuge on the former Naval Air Station once again produced more fledglings in 2009 than any other colony in the state. The largest colony north of Santa Barbara, the AWR tern colony had approximately 314–318 breeding pairs and produced approximately 252–461 fledglings, for a fledging ratio of 1.47. This

was significantly better than any other colony in the state, including the largest colony of 1,639 breeding pairs at Camp Pendleton in San Diego, which produced only 179–204 fledglings. The 2010 season appears to be another good year for the terns, though perhaps not as productive as 2009. Colonies in the south continue to be hit hard by predators such as the Gull-billed Tern and affected by human disturbance.

As the AWR colony continues to grow in importance for the survival of the species, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs refuses to consider any other site for its 120-acre complex, which it proposes to build on top of the refuge in violation of the Endangered Species Act. If you're interested in helping to work on habitat improvements or advocacy for the terns, please join Friends of the Alameda Wildlife Refuge for one of its meetings or contact Mike Lynes at mlynes@goldengateaudubon.org.

GGA TAKES ACTION TO PROTECT YOSEMITE SLOUGH

On September 3, Golden Gate Audubon and the San Francisco Bay Chapter of the Sierra Club filed a lawsuit challenging the adequacy of the Candlestick Point–Hunters Point Redevelopment Phase II Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Although Golden Gate Audubon supports redevelopment of Hunters Point and Candlestick Point, we were forced to file the lawsuit by the unwillingness of the city of San Francisco and the project developer Lennar to remove from

CONSERVATION CORNER continued on page 5

Join a Field Trip and Share Nature with Local Kids

During the school year, staff and volunteers from Golden Gate Audubon's Eco-Education Program visit third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade classrooms in East Oakland and Richmond to teach students about their local ecosystems. The Eco-Education staff welcomes volunteers who can assist on field trips to the Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline and Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline in the fall and on field trips to local creeks in the spring. These class trips are scheduled to coincide with the school day. If you love working with kids and want to teach them about the environment, please contact Anthony de Cicco at adecicco@goldengateaudubon.org to find out about participating in this award-winning—and rewarding—program.

Three Bird-Rich Destinations—Three Fabulous Trips

For more information on these trips—and detailed itineraries—contact Chris Bard, trip coordinator, at chrisbard@earthlink.net or 510.522.5699.

THE NATURAL HISTORY AND ARCHAEOLOGY OF HONDURAS—SECOND TRIP DATE!

If you missed signing up for Golden Gate Audubon's first trip to Honduras, which filled up quickly, there is good news—a second trip has been scheduled for March 19 to 28, 2011. It's easy to see why this trip is popular. The country's location on an ecological divide between North America and southern Central America makes it a naturalist's paradise. Honduras is the home of 740 species of birds, 800 species of orchids, and 1,000 species of butterflies. This trip is designed to highlight the diverse habitats across parts of central and western Honduras. Also on the itinerary is a visit to the Mayan ruins at Copán, a large complex of temples and plazas surrounded by a lush jungle with abundant wildlife.

Our guide will be Robert Gallardo, a naturalist who has resided in Honduras since 1993. He and his wife, Irma, operate a nature center and lodge at Copán and have produced a number of natural history books and CDs. Cost excluding airfare is \$1,800 per person, which includes a \$150 tax-deductible donation to GGA.

BIG BEND AND THE TEXAS HILL COUNTRY

Regarded as a birding hotspot, Big Bend National Park is a vast place with grand vistas, majestic mountains, and spectacular cliffs rising above the Rio Grande. In spring, breeding birds return, and colorful eastern and western warblers and tanagers are in passage at lush oases. Specialties include Lucifer Hummingbird, Colima Warbler, Montezuma Quail, Zone-tailed Hawk, Black Hawk, Gray Hawk, and Painted Bunting. Edwards Plateau, to the east, hosts Black-capped Vireo, Golden-cheeked Warbler, Cave Swallow, Olive Sparrow, and Green Kingfisher. One evening, we will view the emergence of 10 million free-

tailed bats, one of nature's spectacles. On this trip, we'll also photograph and identify many of the Big Bend region's flowers, cacti, mammals, and reptiles.

The trip leader will be Mark Smith of Mark Smith Nature Tours, who has organized and led natural history tours for 25 years. Dates of the trip are April 17–26, 2011. Cost excluding airfare is \$2,235 per person, which includes a \$150 tax-deductible donation to GGA.

NEW TRIP OFFERING: ECUADOR—THE BIRDS OF THE ANDES

Ecuador boasts the highest biodiversity in the world, relative to the size of the country. It holds the record, with 9.2 species per square kilometer. The country's richness lies in its diversity, both natural and cultural. Within Ecuador are four unique regions: the Amazon rain forest, the Andean Mountains, the coastal lowlands, and the

Galápagos Islands. Although a small country, it has more than 1,600 species of birds and therefore is noted for excellent birding opportunities. On this trip, we'll explore a variety of habitats, from the high mountains of the Yanacocha Reserve at 11,482 feet to the lowlands of Silanche Reserve at 984 feet, as we seek out a plethora of endemic and other bird species on the east and west slopes of the Andes.

Our guide will be Edison Buenano of Sword Billed Expeditions. Born in Riobamba, Buenano has worked as a guide for Mindo Bird Tours, Bird Holidays, and Bellavista Cloud Forest Reserve, as well as other eco-tour-friendly outfits, for 12 years. His passion is birding, and his knowledge of bird vocalizations is second to none. Dates of the trip are September 23 to October 7, 2011. Cost excluding airfare is \$3,050 per person, which includes a \$150 tax-deductible donation to GGA.

Special Event Focuses on Birds at Risk

Western Snowy Plovers, Clapper Rails, and Tri-colored Blackbirds are among the birds that Bay Area artist Rita Sklar depicts in her compelling paintings. By choosing species at risk and emphasizing their beauty, Sklar wants to remind us that the diminishing populations not only are a loss to birders but send an urgent warning about the health of our environment.

An exhibit of her work, "Vanishing Birds of the Bay Area and Beyond," is on view through November 16 at the Thos. Moser Showroom, 3395 Sacramento Street, San Francisco. You are invited to attend a reception on Wednesday, November 10, 5 to 7 p.m., to meet Rita and to hear Golden Gate Audubon discuss our work to help reduce the decline of bird populations in the Bay Area. Join us to find out what Golden Gate Audubon is doing to help the many birds that rely on Bay Area habitats.



California Quail.

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SPEAKER SERIES

JENNIFER ROBINSON MADDOX, COORDINATOR

California's Marine Life Protection Act: A Bird's-Eye View

Karen Garrison

San Francisco: Thursday, November 18 – 7 p.m. refreshments, 7:30 p.m. program

More breeding seabirds flock to the Farallon Islands than any other spot on the continental west coast, and California's shores are dotted with hotspots where seabirds congregate to breed and feed. Seabirds and the many marine mammals drawn to such locations depend on their rich web of ocean life. But like other ocean systems, ours faces a variety of threats. In 1999, the state enacted the landmark Marine Life Protection Act to help address those threats, embarking on the rocky road to designing science-based networks of protected areas in the state's ocean waters. Now, 10 years later, that inclusive process has created a necklace of protected biological gems along the central coast, much like our system of parks and refuges on land. Join Karen Garrison for a tour of the amazing ocean life in our backyard and the challenges of protecting that legacy for the future.

Karen Garrison is a senior policy analyst in the National Resources Defense Council's San Francisco office, where she directs NRDC's program to protect marine life and ecosystems on the Pacific Coast. An active participant in California's initiative to strengthen its network of underwater parks through the Marine Life Protection Act, she also works to improve fishery management. Karen holds an MS from the Energy and Resources Group at UC Berkeley and has worked at NRDC for 20 years.

San Francisco Speaker Series: First Unitarian Universalist Church and Center, 1187 Franklin Street at Geary. Visit www.uusf.org/visitors_faq.html, and use the Map It! link on the left for directions. Public transit, street parking, and parking in a lot for a fee are available.

Double Your Money!

Your gift to Golden Gate Audubon can be easily doubled to provide twice the clout for bird protection if your employer offers a matching gift program. Many employers will donate to match their employees' gifts. The following companies are just some of those that have matching gift programs.

BlackRock
Chevron Humankind Matching Gifts Program
Russell Matching Gifts Program
The Clorox Company Foundation
Barclays Global Investor Matching Gift Center
PG&E
Sun Trust Foundation

Check with your employer or human resources department. Giving a double gift is as simple as filling out a short form. Then the company does the rest. And don't forget that your gift is always more than doubled by the hundreds of volunteers who contribute their time and energy to Golden Gate Audubon programs.



US Fish and Wildlife Service

Tufted Puffins, one of the species that breeds at the Farallon Islands.

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then project a proposed bridge over Yosemite Slough, which separates Candlestick Point and Hunters Point.

The bridge, estimated to cost nearly \$100 million (to be paid by taxpayers), would travel through and over the Yosemite Slough restoration area – San Francisco's largest wetland restoration site, which is intended to provide habitat for the endangered California Clapper Rail, the threatened Western Snowy Plover, and other sensitive species that have already lost more than 90 percent of their habitat in San Francisco Bay. The bridge will save only two minutes of transit time, and even the city of San Francisco's redevelopment director was unable to say on the record that the bridge was necessary for the successful completion of the project. It is hoped that we can resolve this matter quickly and in a manner that protects the birds and other natural values of the Yosemite Slough area.

NEED TREE WORK DONE? NOW IS THE TIME!

If you have a tree that needs trimming or removal, late fall or early winter is the best time to conduct this work. In the Bay Area, Great Horned Owls and Anna's Hummingbirds may have active nests between January and March. Other bird species in the Bay Area have active nests from March through the end of July. Doing tree work now will avoid impacting nesting birds.

LANDS END RESTORATION

Observe the birds of Lands End in San Francisco, while you work to improve their habitat. The East Wash, a site within the interior of Lands End, is known for its high avian diversity, including resident species such as White-crowned Sparrow and migrants such as Townsend's Warbler.

Golden Gate Audubon and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy are partnering to hold a restoration workday on December 11, 1 to 4 p.m. Participants should meet at the top of the golf course access road across from the Palace of the Legion of Honor, where 34th Avenue meets El Camino del Mar. Please wear comfortable clothing and sturdy shoes. Tools, water, and snacks will be provided.



FIELD TRIPS

JENNIFER ROBINSON MADDOX, COORDINATOR

\$ Entrance fee

Biking trip

For more information, you cannot reach Jennifer at (415) 553-5620 or email jrmaddox@sfu.dubios.org. For more information on the publication of the next newsletter, contact Jennifer at (415) 553-5620.

Las Gallinas Water Treatment Facility

Marin County

Thursday, November 4, 8:30 – 11:30 a.m.

Emilie Strauss, 510.540.8749

Waterfowl, raptors, shorebirds, and passerines—Las Gallinas is always an interesting destination, with chances to see otters and coyotes as well as birds. The walk is level, along the pond levees, and many birds are close and easily seen. This fairly easy walk offers a wide variety of species. Rain cancels.

Take Hwy. 101 north through San Rafael and exit at Smith Ranch Rd. (also marked for Lucas Valley Rd.). Turn right (east) onto Smith Ranch Rd. and continue to the park at end of road. Turn left at the small sign for Las Gallinas and wildlife viewing, and go to the end to the parking lot.

Jewel Lake

Tilden Regional Park, Berkeley

Fridays, November 5, December 3, 8:30 – 10:30 a.m.

Phila Rogers, coordinator, 510.848.9156, philajane6@yahoo.com

We continue our monthly first Friday trips at Tilden. Meet at the parking lot at the north end of Central Park Dr. for a 1-mile, 2-hour-plus stroll through this lush riparian area. Phila will coordinate the walks in November and December.

San Francisco Botanical Garden

Sundays, November 7, December 5, 8 – 10:30 a.m.

Alan Ridley, allanrid@pacbell.net; Helen McKenna, 415.566.3241; Ginny Marshall; Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com

Meet at the front gate of garden in Golden Gate Park, 9th Ave. at Lincoln Way. This delightful section of the park has several micro habitats that attract an array of resident, migrant, and vagrant birds. This monthly trip is oriented toward

helping beginning birders develop their skills in spotting and identifying birds. The garden now charges \$7/person if you are not an SF resident or a Botanical Garden member. Please bring identification for residency and membership status.

Shadow Cliffs Regional Recreation Area

Alameda County

Saturday, November 13, 9 a.m. – noon

Steve and Carol Lombardi, 925.785.0130, hot-rock@sbcglobal.net

This delightful park in Pleasanton has varied habitats and many species in a small area. We'll get close looks at waterfowl and marsh birds in the ponds, then seek out resident and migrant woodland birds in the riparian woods. We should also see raptors (Osprey, Red-shouldered Hawk) and waders. Walking is mainly flat on paved and unpaved trails. Meet in the main parking lot to your left as you enter the park. Parking fee is \$6. Directions: www.ebparks.org/parks/shadow_cliffs. \$

Upper Alameda Creek/ Quarry Lakes

Alameda County

Saturday, November 13

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233, kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

The trip will concentrate on upper Alameda Creek from Quarry Lakes to Niles Staging Area. We will ride on both the north gravel and south paved sides of Alameda Creek and on gravel trails within Quarry Lakes and also on the street. Bring lunch and liquids. Dress for variable weather. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. Email or call for mobile numbers. Note: Directions differ from earlier trips.

Transit: Meet at Union City BART station at 8:15 a.m. Fremont train passes through MacArthur at 7:34. Return may be from Fremont BART. **Car:** Meet at 8:30

at Isherwood Staging Area adjacent to Quarry Lakes. Take I-880 to Alvarado Blvd./Fremont Blvd. exit in Fremont. Go east, then turn left onto Paseo Padre Parkway; .8 mi after Decoto Rd., turn left onto Isherwood Way, cross the bridge, and then immediately turn right into the staging area. Transit schedules: www.transitinfo.org. East Bay Regional Park District: www.ebparks.org.

Bird Walk for Beginners and Children at Aquatic Park

San Francisco

Sunday, November 14, 10 –11 a.m.

Carol Kiser, Carol_Kiser@nps.gov

Park Ranger Carol Kiser will teach you how to locate and identify some common waterbirds and land birds during this easy stroll along the Aquatic Park shoreline. Bring binoculars and bird books if you have them. Wear sunblock and a hat, and dress in layers. Carol Kiser, park ranger for many years at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park, has led bird walks since approximately 1990. There is free 4-hour parking at the foot of Van Ness Ave. Parking garages are in Ghirardelli Square on Beach St. and at the Anchorage Mall on Beach near Leavenworth.

Chain of Lakes

Golden Gate Park, San Francisco

Sunday, November 14, 8 a.m.

Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com

Meet at the benches on the north side of North Lake (nearest intersection is Fulton and 43rd Ave.). This walk will cover North Lake and the west side of park. We'll visit the White-crowned Sparrow habitat enhancement projects at the bison paddock. We may also walk to the beach and look for shorebirds.

Corona Heights

San Francisco

Fridays, November 19, December 17, 8 – 10 a.m.

Brian Fitch; Dominik Mosur, polskatata@yahoo.com

Meet in front of the Randall Museum, 199 Museum Way, at end of Museum Way off Roosevelt. We will enjoy views of the

city and bay as we circle Corona Heights, checking the east canyon woodland and north forest for residents and migrants, as well as monitoring the hilltop scrub and south cliff.

San Francisco and San Pablo Bays with Dolphin Charters

Saturday, November 20

9:45 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Eddie Bartley

Spaces may still be available on this trip by boat to see abundant wintering birds. Participants meet at the Berkeley Marina by 9:45 a.m. for departure at 10 a.m. to cruise San Francisco Bay and San Pablo Bay waters. The route includes Alcatraz, Angel Island, the Marin Islands, the Brothers and Sisters Islands, Red Rock, and the Richmond shoreline. Dress in layers. Bring liquids and lunch.

Trip is limited to 32 participants. Cost is \$85 for GGA members, \$95 for nonmembers. Reserve by contacting Stephanie Strait, GGA Office Manager, 510.843.2222 or qgas@goldenqateaudubon.org.

Bird Walk for Beginners at MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline

Sunday, November 21, 9 – 11:30 a.m.
Laura Gobbi, 510.435.9802,
lmgobbi@gmail.com

Fall birding is spectacular at this wonderful East Bay Regional Park, where the habitat suits both migrant and resident birds. Come learn to locate and identify some common waterbirds and land birds during this easy walk. We will begin at Edgewater Dr. trailhead and make our way toward Arrowhead Marsh. Please bring a scope if you one. Dress in layers. Heavy rains cancels.

Take I-880 to Hegenberger Rd. Make first right turn onto Edgewater and go all the way to the end. Park at the East Bay Regional Park lot, on the left.

Lake Merritt and Lakeside Park

Wednesdays, November 24,
December 22, 9:30 a.m. – noon
Hilary Powers, 510.834.1066,
hilary@powersedit.com; Ruth Tobey
510.528.2093, ruthtobey@gmail.com

Meet at the large open space at the Nature Center at Perkins and Bellanca. We will bird around there, then go up the garden path toward Children's Fair, late or walk down the lake toward Fratino's cedar, after which we will cover what we missed. November and December are two of our peak months; all the winter migrants should be here by late November and be present in December (though the Barrow's Goldeneyes may have withdrawn to the 12th St. end of the lake).

Take the 12, N, or NL bus to Granfield and Perkins, and walk into the park on Perkins. Best parking is at the house lot near spattered ledge. Entry via Bellevue near Children's Fairyland is probably free on weekdays, but will be \$3 if the kiosk is open when you arrive.

Redwood Shores

Saturday, December 4

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Meet at 10:15 a.m. at trailhead at Oracle Parkway and Shoreway Rd., Belmont. High tide is 10:20. This circuit of Redwood Shores is a flat 11-mile loop on the SF Bay Trail and other bike paths, mostly paved, and on bike lanes on city streets. Highlight is the sewer ponds at Radio Road. Bring lunch and liquids. Dress for variable weather. Bicycle helmet required. Rain

Burrowing Owl Program Launches New Season

Golden Gate Audubon's Burrowing Owl Docent Program kicked off its third season in mid-September when 21 docents, including 7 participants from the previous year, attended an all-day training. In the week following the training, docents began to monitor Cesar Chavez Park near the Berkeley Marina, anticipating the imminent return of the owls. Each year, a handful of Western Burrowing Owls spend the winter in the park. The docents point out the owls to park users and educate the public about the need to protect them. We invite you to visit the park and see the owls before they leave at the end of March.

Look for GGA Docents on the San Francisco Bay Trail

Beginning in November, docents trained by GGA for our Birding the Bay Trail program will set up birding stations at key spots along the Bay Trail, focusing on the section between the Richmond Marina and the Albany mudflats. At the stations, docents will invite people not only to see the birds up close through spotting scopes but also to find out more about this area of west Contra Costa County. As part of the training, docents heard presentations from our partner organizations about their important work along this section of the trail and the area's fascinating natural and human history. Keep your eye on the GGA field trips web page, where we will post docent days along the trail.

Wintering Raptors and Waterfowl of Solano and Yolo Counties

Saturday, December 11, 8 a.m.
Terry Colborn, 916 705 8991,
www.tlcbirding.com

The open agricultural lands of Solano and Yolo Counties provide excellent foraging habitat for scores of wintering raptors, while the wetlands of the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area are the winter home for

FIELD TRIPS (cont'd. from page 5)

Birdwatching in Panama

Panama, at the tropical junction between North and South America, is the destination for a June 2011 trip offered by Golden Gate Audubon and the Latin America Committee. Panama has more than 960 species of birds—think toucans, antbirds, manakins, and motmots—and such interesting nonavian wildlife as sloths and howler monkeys. Expert Panamanian birder and Panama Audubon Society Conservation Director Guido Berguido will be our guide. GGA past president Steve Margolin, who has led five trips to Panama for GGA, will lead the trip.

We will visit a variety of places in central and eastern Panama Province, including the world-famous Pipeline Road, the Madden Forest, and, for specialties of nearby Darién Province, the San Francisco Reserve. We will travel to El Valle for birds of the foothills west of Panama City and finish up with a festive dinner overlooking the Miraflores Locks of the Panama Canal. An optional extension to western Panama will include the islands of Bocas del Toro, a transect of the Isthmus, and Boquete for birds of the western highlands (maybe even Resplendent Quetzal).

Dates are June 4–12, 2011, with an extension June 12–16. Birders of all experience levels are welcome. This trip is not designed for listers. Cost, including airfare, is estimated at \$2,900 per person (plus \$950 for the extension); this includes a \$250 tax-deductible donation (plus \$50 for the extension) for GGA and the Latin America Committee. For more information, contact Steve Margolin, sgpanama@digitalpath.net or 530.342.6476.

FIELD TRIPS from page 7

thousands of waterfowl including ducks, geese, and swans, and for many shorebirds. This all-day trip will visit several habitats in search of Ferruginous and Rough-legged Hawks; Merlin; Prairie Falcon; Burrowing, Barn, and Great-horned Owls; and Long-billed Curlew, as well as the elusive and threatened Mountain Plover. We also expect to see a representative sampling of waterfowl and a variety of shorebirds at Yolo Basin.

The trip is limited to 10 vehicles, to facilitate caravanning from place to place. Therefore, car sharing will be required. Please contact the leader to RSVP and for information on carpooling from the Bay Area and at the meeting place in Dixon.

San Francisco Classes Starting Up

Joe Morlan's evening classes, held in San Francisco, begin November 2, 3, and 4. The classes cover bird biology and behavior, and North American land birds and waterbirds. For details, go to <http://fog.ccsf.cc.ca.us/~jmorlan> or call 415.561.1860.

Meet the leader at 8 a.m. in Dixon in the southwest corner of the Wal-Mart parking lot located on East Dorset Dr. at the Hwy. 113 exit off I-80. Bring lunch and liquids; dress in layers. Heavy rain cancels.

Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline Oakland

Sunday, January 2, 2011

Kathy Jarrett, 510.547.1233,
kathy_jarrett@yahoo.com

Winter high tides are a good time to see rails at the MLK Regional Shoreline in Oakland. If there has been enough rain, lots of ducks and shorebirds will be in the seasonal wetlands. High tide (7.7 feet) occurs at 9:59 a.m. Meet at Fruitvale BART at 9 a.m. or at the Tidewater Staging Area at 9:20. We'll ride the SF Bay Trail from East Creek Point to Damon Marsh and Arrowhead Marsh. Return is via Doolittle Dr. and Fernside Blvd.

Bring lunch and liquids. Dress for variable weather. Bicycle helmet required. Rain cancels. Email or call for mobile numbers.

Car: Exit I-880 at High St. in Oakland and go southwest to High St. Bridge to Alameda. Cross bridge and turn left onto Fernside Blvd., park on street. Bike back over bridge, turn right onto Tidewater Ave., and go 25 mi. to the Tidewater Staging Area on right.

Cornell Lab of Ornithology Course Postponed

Many of you are wondering about the Home Study Course in Bird Biology for 2011. We have learned that the Cornell Lab of Ornithology is about to publish a new version of the textbook in 2011. In the meantime, the old version is no longer available. As a result, Golden Gate Audubon will not hold our companion class next year. When we see the new version of the book, we will schedule the class. Until then, please let Office Manager Stephanie Strait know if you are interested by contacting her at 510.843.2222 or ggas@goldengateaudubon.org. We will inform you some time next year whether and when the class will be offered.

Lesser St. is just beyond on the left. Transit schedules: www.transitinfo.org. East Bay Regional Park District: www.ebparks.org.

Sacramento River Delta with Dolphin Charters

Saturday, February 19, 2011,
8:30 a.m. – 5 p.m.

GGA leader to be announced

Join Golden Gate Audubon and Dolphin Charters on board the comfortable *Delphinus*, departing from the Antioch Marina for a wonderful day of exploring the rich habitats and meandering channels of the Sacramento Delta. We can expect to see thousands of Tundra Swan, Snow Geese, White-fronted Geese, and Canada Geese, and myriad ducks. We will also look for overwintering and resident raptors, as well as Great Horned Owl. Bring lunch, liquids, and warm clothing.

Trip is limited to 30 participants. Cost is \$80 for GGA members, \$90 for non-members. Deadline for reserving space and making payment is Friday, January 14, 2011. Contact Stephanie Strait, GGA Office Manager, 510.843.2222 or ggas@goldengateaudubon.org. Those confirmed on the trip will receive directions to the marina and other instructions. \$



OBSERVATIONS

BRUCE MAST AUGUST 1 – SEPTEMBER 26, 2010

LOONS TO DUCKS

A boat trip to SE Farallon Island, SF, logged a Laysan Albatross on Sep. 18 (DW). Despite the surge in Cook's Petrel sightings this summer, the only report from the Bay Area was from the Sep. 15 Bodega Cyn. and Cordell Bank trip, MRN (SHo, DSh; mob). The recent increase in reports off the Pacific Coast has been attributed to the successful removal of rats and cats from petrel breeding grounds on Little Barrier Island, New Zealand.

Several pelagic trips to SF and SM waters from Half Moon Bay Sep. 11–17 reported good numbers of storm-petrels, including high counts of 7 Wilson's, 14 Fork-tailed, 2 Leach's, 75 Black, and 6 Least Storm-Petrels among the 100s of Ashys (DSh, HC; oob). A couple of Harlequin Ducks returned to the waters off the PRNS Fish Docks by Aug. 20 (RS).

RAPTORS TO ALCIDS

An American Golden-Plover (*Pluvialis dominica*) was discovered on Aug. 19 on the mudflats at Nicasio Res., MRN (TB; DM). Stilt Sandpipers showed up on Sep. 7 at SON Baylands (RS) and on the 20th at Doran Beach (RS; oob). A female Ruff was spied on the jetty at Pillar Pt. in Princeton, SM, on Aug. 17 (ADM). The sole land-based report of Red Phalarope was Sep. 1 from Pilarcitos Cr. in Half Moon Bay, SM (DSi).

A Franklin's Gull dropped in at Pillar Pt. Harbor on Sep. 7 (AJ). A Sabine's Gull entering the Golden Gate on Sep. 6 was the only landlubber sighting for that species (HC). An Arctic Tern strayed through the Golden Gate on Sep. 8, seen from Fort Pt., SF (SHa). Two Black Terns lingered at Salt Pond A16 in Alviso, SCL, Aug. 15–17 (MR; mob). On Sep. 19, a Black Tern was picked out of the tern flock at Iron House Sanitary District, CC (BM; BP, BW).

Pairs of Xantus's Murrelets were located on the Half Moon Bay pelagic trips on Sep. 13 and 17 and the Cordell Bank trip on the 15th (DSh; oob). A Craveri's Murrelet was reported from a boat out of Half Moon Bay on the 13th (JC).



Ruby-throated Hummingbird at the Wildlife Gallery Bolinas

DOVES TO THRASHERS

Aug. 19 was the last report of a Black Swift at Año Nuevo SR, SM (PSo). A female Ruby-throated Hummingbird (*Archilochus colubris*) found a welcome way station at the feeders at the Wildlife Gallery in Bolinas, MRN, Aug. 9–24 (KH; mob). The same or a different bird was netted at SE Farallon Island, SF, on the 29th (PRBO). A Costa's Hummingbird headed out to Hole-in-the-Head at Bodega Harbor on Sep. 20 (RS; oob).

On Sep. 22, a Williamson's Sapsucker flushed from the willows and oaks along Lobos Cr., SF (AS, JC). A Least Flycatcher was reported on Aug. 21 from SE Farallon Island, SF (PRBO). On Sep. 19, a Blue-

Gray Flycatcher (*Vireo solitarius*) was located in a cypress along S. E. Merced St., BE. A Red-eyed Vireo was located at Mendoza (B) Ranch PRNS, MRN, on Sep. 19 (SE, HH; oob). The same day, a Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Vireo flavifrons*) was reported from Chimney Rock Trail, PRNS, MRN, RS, (RS; mob). Visitors to the PRNS Lighthouse on Sep. 10 found a Gray Catbird (ME).

WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES

Prime weather conditions at SE Farallon Island, Sep. 12–14 brought in a vagrant way that included a Common Yellowthroat (*Oporornis agilis*) and a Mourning Warbler (*Oporornis philadelphicus*) (PRBO). Birders around the region also tallied 6 Tennessee, 8 Chestnut-sided, 3 Magnolia, 4 Blackburnian, 1 Palm, 1 Bay-breasted, 15 Blackpoll, 9 Black-and-white, and 2 Canada Warblers, 9 American Redstarts, 3 Northern Water-thrushes, and a Yellow-breasted Chat.

In mid-September, Green-tailed Towhees dispersed from their mountain retreats as far as Mix Cyn. Rd., SOI (RM), and Battery Godfrey, Presidio, SF (PSa; oob). A Vesper Sparrow joined 2 Savannah Sparrows at Bedwell Bayfront Park, SM, on Sep. 25 (GC). On Sep. 22, a juvenile Black-throated Sparrow followed the crowned sparrows to a hill above the Quarry Parking Lot at Coyote Hills RP, ALA (GW; mob). A female Lark Bunting flushed from the grasses along the Chimney Rock Trail, PRNS, on Sep. 16 (BC). An Indigo Bunting settled along Stevens Cr., SCL, starting Sep. 14 (MR, BB). A Bobolink flew by at Alviso Marina CP, SCL, on Sep. 25 (MR).

Semicolons separate original observer(s) from subsequent observer(s). Abbreviations: (mob) = many observers; (mob) + other observers. Information is compiled from BirdBox transcripts and regional listservs; the author apologizes for any errors or omissions.

Abbreviations for Observers: ADM, Al DeMartini; AJ, Alvaro Jaramillo; AS, Andrew Scavullo; BP, Bill Bousman; BC, Barbare Cetisch; BF, Brian Fitch; BM, Bruce Mast; BP, Bob Power; BW, Bill Walker; DM, Dominik Mosur; DSh, Debra Shearwater; DSi, Dan Singer; DW, David Wampfheimer; GC, George Chrisman; GW, Gail West; HC, Hugh Cottier; JC, Josiah Clark; JM, Joe Merlan; KH, Keith Hansen; LT, Linda Terrill; MB, Matt Brady; MF, Mark Forner; MP, Mike Rogers; PSa, Paul Saraceni; PSi, Pete Soile; PM, Roger Muskat; PS, Rich Stallcup; SHa, Steve Hampton; SHo, Steve Howell; ST, Scott Terrill; TB, Tony Briggs.

Abbreviations for Counties and Others: ALA, Alameda; CC, Contra Costa; CP, County Park; Cr, Creek; Cyn, Canyon; DENWR, Don Edwards National Wildlife Refuge; EEC, Environmental Education Center; GGP, Golden Gate Park; Hwy, Highway; L, Lake; MRN, Marin; Mt, Mount; N, North; NAP, Napa; NWP, National Wildlife Refuge; OSP, Open Space Preserve; PRBO, Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory; PRNS, Pt. Reyes National Seashore; Pt, Point; Rd, Road; Res, Reservoir; RF, Regional Park; RS, Regional Shoreline; S, South; SB, State Beach; SCL, Santa Clara; SF, San Francisco; SM, San Mateo; SQL, Sausalito; SON, Sonoma; SP, State Park; SF, State Reserve; WPCP, Water Pollution Control Plant.

YOUR VOTE from page 1

on the board bravely voted to reject the EIR and worked to remove the bridge from the plan. But, in the end, the money and political influence of those who do not care about wildlife or their habitats triumphed, and San Francisco's natural environment will suffer further because of it.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that cannot endorse candidates, Golden Gate Audubon sometimes lacks the political clout to persuade elected officials to protect wildlife. Although we do not support individual candidates, we can identify important questions that may help our members decide which candidates to support.

You can help us gain greater influence with elected officials by communicating with those candidates you choose to support. If you write a check to support a campaign, include a note that says you're a GGA member and that your support is contingent on the candidate working with us

to protect wildlife and their habitats. If you have a chance to pose a question to a candidate, consider asking what the candidate will do to protect wildlife and habitat—even when faced with difficult decisions between economic development and protecting threatened or endangered species.

As you communicate with your candidates or give to their campaigns, consider the priorities and questions identified below.

SAN FRANCISCO PRIORITIES

San Francisco has very little natural habitat left, and recent decisions by Mayor Gavin Newsom's administration and the board of supervisors are contributing to the continued decline. This election is a great opportunity to support those supervisors who have a proven track record of protecting the environment or to elect new members over incumbents who have demonstrated indifference or hostility to environmental protection. As you consider which candi-

date to support, ask yourself (or, better yet, ask the candidate!):

- Did the candidate vote to support the bridge over Yosemite Slough, or would the candidate have done so if he or she had been on the board at the time?
- Will the candidate work to help keep the city's few natural areas free of unnecessary lights, off-leash dogs, and other disturbances that are contributing to the decline in native wildlife populations?
- Will the candidate vote to protect the endangered San Francisco Garter Snake and the California Red-legged Frog by closing Sharp Park golf course?

STATEWIDE ISSUES

As California struggles with its budget crisis, opponents of environmental protection are seizing the opportunity to weaken environmental laws and regulations. Such

YOUR VOTE continued on page 11

Donations through September 30, 2010

Thank you for your generous donations to support our many conservation, education, and member activities!

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Holiday Shopping at the GGA Nature Store

Whether your gift list includes long-time birders or beginners, the Golden Gate Audubon Nature Store carries items appropriate for all budgets. Remember that GGA members receive a 10 percent discount on store purchases—and that the proceeds help fund our conservation and education programs.

New to the store this season is a selection of colorful bird-themed gifts: pocket-sized journals, each with 160 lined pages enclosed in an attractive bird-themed cover; a set of four coasters; pads of large sticky notes; and a set of 80 labels practical for a multitude of uses. If you or someone else needs to get organized ahead of the new year, consider the sturdy 11.5-by-12.5-inch file tote with interior compartments and exterior botanical and bird design. Member prices range from \$3 to \$13.

In addition to the ever-popular Sibley, Peterson, Kaufman, and National Geographic field guides, the Nature Store carries books ideal for anyone with a budding interest in birding. *National Geographic Birding Essentials*, by Jonathan Alderfer and Jon Dunn, is a reader-friendly,

authoritative guide to the basics: from choosing equipment to identifying birds, to using field guides. In *The Bird Watching Answer Book*, Laura Erickson follows a question-and-answer format to cover myriad topics, among them migration, behavior, identification, and biology. Praised for its accessibility, accuracy, and organization, this compact book by the Cornell Lab of Ornithology science editor would also make a welcome gift for experienced birders.

In *Birding for Everyone: Encouraging People of Color to Become Birdwatchers*, John Robinson draws on his extensive background as a natural history guide to help readers develop a basic knowledge of birds and offers proven tips for identifying birds by sight and sound. Kenn Kaufman calls this “an extremely important book” and recommends it to anyone interested in nature study, conservation, and environmental education.



Two specialized guides are *Bird Tracks and Signs* and *Eggs and Nestlings of North American Birds*. Each takes a comprehensive approach to its subject and uses charts, illustrations, and/or photographs to convey information.

The Nature Store stocks two wall calendars: Audubon Songbirds and John James Audubon Birds of America. The equally popular Audubon Engagement Calendar is formatted as a week-at-a-glance date book. Prices for members are \$10 to \$13.

Another option is to surprise a friend or family member with a gift membership or even a membership renewal by using the form on page 12 or by going to our website.

The store, located at the GGA office, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite G, in Berkeley, is open during office hours, Monday–Friday, 10 a.m.–5 p.m. Merchandise will also be for sale at the Oakland Christmas Bird Count dinner on December 19.

YOUR VOTE from page 10

decisions will contribute to the continued decline of species such as the Golden Eagle and the Western Burrowing Owl. Some questions to ask include:

- Will the candidate support or strengthen environmental laws such as the California Environmental Quality Act, to ensure that economic growth and development include adequate protections for the environment such as clean air, clean water, and wildlife habitat?
- Will the candidate maintain California's commitment to develop renewable energy resources and reduce dependence on carbon-producing fuels such as coal and petroleum products?
- Will the candidate support reform of California's water system to ensure protection for the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta and its fragile ecology?

FEDERAL ISSUES

The election could significantly affect how the United States develops its energy policy, protects endangered species, and participates in global environmental initiatives, such as international climate change agreements. Consider such questions as:

- Will the candidate support a comprehensive energy production and conservation strategy that ensures adequate protections for the environment while reducing our dependence on carbon-producing fuels?
- Will the candidate support science-based environmental policy, with funding for agencies such as the U.S. Geological Survey and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Agency?
- Will the candidate support U.S. involvement in international biodiversity and climate change agreements?

OUR OBLIGATION CONTINUES AFTER ELECTION DAY!

You can affect the outcome of environmental matters. If you're concerned about an issue that you hear about from Golden Gate Audubon or read in a newspaper, tell your local representatives that you're a GGA member and that you want them to take action—and that it may make the difference between winning and losing your support in the next election. Only when politicians understand that wildlife and their habitats have a vocal—and powerful—representation in the electorate will they start to make better decisions that protect the Bay Area's natural bounty.

You can also get involved in local issues through one of our three conservation committees. To learn more go to www.goldengateaudubon.org.

—Mark Welther, Executive Director, and
Mike Lynes, Conservation Director

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